Chapter 6: Stakeholder Involvement Methods

Stakeholder involvement methods are used to identify, recruit and structure the involvement of diverse stakeholders throughout the watershed planning process. The methods help align the resources of stakeholders toward common goals and are essential in adopting and implementing any watershed plan. Stakeholder involvement helps ensure that the watershed plan is realistic and scientifically sound, and that it reflects community values and desires. The goal is to progressively transform stakeholders into partners that support and implement the plan. More details on each of the six methods for stakeholder involvement are provided in User's Guide Tool 20. The methods are:

A. Recruit Stakeholders
B. Educate Stakeholders
C. Refine Local Vision, Goals and Objectives
D. Manage Stakeholder Meetings
E. Hold Neighborhood Consultation Meetings
F. Incorporate External Plan Review

A. Recruit Stakeholders

This method is used to identify and recruit stakeholders that live or work in the watershed to participate in the planning process. Common stakeholder targets include civic groups, churches, neighborhood associations, schools, institutional landowners, businesses, and other groups.

Effective stakeholder identification and recruitment consists of six basic tasks, as described below:

1. *Analyze subwatershed maps:* Subwatershed maps should be carefully analyzed to locate potential stakeholders such as schools, large institutions, churches, parks, and large landowners. The core team should also identify other cooperatives with similar goals such as hunt and fish clubs. Other organizations such as power plants and local businesses may represent an opportunity for corporate sponsorship.

2. *Get contact data for neighborhood associations and civic groups:* Not all stakeholders show up on maps so the local agency responsible for community planning should be contacted to find out if any active neighborhood, civic or homeowner associations are present in the subwatershed and acquire current contact information.

3. *Interview community multipliers:* Community multipliers are people who not only actively seek environmental information, but also are predisposed to support and adopt stewardship practices. Examples include participants in churches, schools, recreational groups, parks, and business organizations. These individuals should be interviewed to expand the stakeholder list. Community multipliers are very active and influential in

civic affairs, and are five times more likely to attend a community meeting than their peers (NEETF, 2003) and can bring in additional stakeholders.

4. *Develop a contact database:* In this task, a database is assembled that contains up-to-date contact information on existing, new and potential stakeholders in the subwatershed. The database should contain names, mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email information for each stakeholder, and be capable of quickly printing mailing labels and email lists for outreach efforts.

5. *Survey stakeholders*: The team should find out how individual stakeholders want to be involved in the planning process, and more specifically, their preferences as to where and when they want to meet. This intelligence is critical to schedule meeting times and places.

6. *Deliver materials:* In the last task, invitations and educational materials are sent to potential stakeholders to recruit them into the planning process. Several different outreach techniques (invitation letters, fact sheets, newspaper articles, etc.) should be used to recruit the greatest number of stakeholders, and let them know about the watershed planning process.

Local governments may want to consider taking advantage of the stakeholder involvement expertise of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Watershed Planning Assistance office. Available assistance includes staff training on stakeholder involvement and organizing, facilitating, and holding stakeholder meetings. For more information visit: www.chesapeakebay.net/info/watershedplanningassist.cfm.

B. Educate Stakeholders

Stakeholders need to be educated about key watershed problems and solutions, become familiar with watershed planning efforts, and learn the roles they play in the process. Stakeholders may also be given the opportunity to help develop the list of priority subwatersheds. Many stakeholder education resources are available to Maryland communities, which are outlined in User's Guide Tool 21.

Three basic tasks are used to translate and condense data into effective outreach materials to educate new and existing stakeholders:

1. *Translate data:* The real challenge is to distill watershed data into formats that are both accessible and understandable. Simple maps and compelling photographs help stakeholders visualize watershed problems. These images can be combined with extremely concise statements about watershed problems and issues to create a powerful educational message.

2. *Choose outreach techniques:* A broad range of outreach techniques can deliver basic watershed protection and restoration messages to watershed stakeholders (see Table 6.1). Outreach techniques should always include a place where stakeholders can get

more information and offer a way for them to participate, preferably with options for the amount of time and effort needed. Baltimore County's Stream Watch Program is an excellent example of providing stakeholders with varying levels of involvement and is highlighted in the Real World Example below.

4. *Create forums:* Education is intended to motivate stakeholders into action. Therefore it is important to create opportunities for stakeholders to use the information they learn to make better watershed planning decisions. Classifying and Ranking Subwatersheds (see Chapter 4) provide an early opportunity for stakeholders to weigh in and provide direct input into metrics related to citizen concern and community organization.

Table 6.1: Summary of Techniques to Reach Out to Stakeholders

• Advisory Committees • Bill Stuffer • Briefings • Brochures • Community Facilitators • Community Fairs • Consensus Building Techniques • Daytime Meetings • Displays in Public Spaces • E-mail Updates • Expert Panels • Fact Sheets • Focus Groups • Hotlines • Interviews • Issue Papers • Mail Surveys • News Conference • Newsletters	• Newspaper Advertisements • Newspaper Inserts • Newspaper Story • Night Meetings • Open Houses • Photo Opportunity • Press Releases • Response Sheets • Signing Ceremony • Stream Tours • Subwatershed Plan • Task Forces • Technical Reports • Telephone or Internet Surveys • Watershed Festivals • Watershed Maps • Watershed Website • Workshops
Adapted from IAP2 (2003) and other sources	

Real World Example: Baltimore County's Stream Watch Program

In 2002, Baltimore County initiated a "Stream Watch" pilot program to provide citizen involvement in stream assessment and restoration activities at a level of their own choosing. The pilot program is a joint partnership between the Jones Falls Watershed Association (JFWA), Center for Watershed Protection and Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM).

There are five levels of adoption under the Stream Watch Program. Each level varies in the type of activities volunteers will complete in their adoption section(s). The following table provides a description of and incentives for each adoption level.

Stream Watch Program Volunteer Descriptions and Incentives		
Level	*Description*	*Incentive/Recognition*
I. Stream Cleaner	Pick up trash and debris	• Web listing/newsletter recognition • Certificate • Bumper sticker • Thank you letter
II. Stream Walker	Identify major in-stream and riparian problems	• Level I incentives • T-shirt
III. Stream Watcher	Assess major in-stream and riparian problems	• Level I and II incentives
IV. Stream Monitor – Bug Collector	Collecting aquatic insects at fixed stations	• Level I incentives
V. Stream Monitor – Snapshot Sampler	Collecting water samples at fixed stations	• Level I incentives
Additional Awards for Multiple Levels of Adoption: • Special Certificate • Additional Mention in Annual Report • Rain Gauge • Volunteer Award		

The data gathered by volunteers is maintained in a database by JFWA and is used to provide DEPRM and JFWA with data on stream health and identify potential stream protection and restoration projects. To date, more than 14 miles have been adopted, with volunteer leaders heading up approximately 40 teams and a total participation of more than 100 volunteers.

In addition to the program, DEPRM also offers grants to locally based non-profit watershed associations to support the Stream Watch program and other citizen-based environmental restoration activities. DEPRM intends to expand "Stream Watch" to all 14 watersheds located within Baltimore County after the successful implementation of the pilot program in the Jones Falls watershed.

Center for Watershed Protection and Jones Falls Watershed Association. 2004. *Developing and Implementing a Stream Watch Program*. Center for Watershed Protection. Ellicott City, MD.

C. Refine Local Vision, Goals and Objectives

Goal-setting requires extensive input from stakeholders to identify important community concerns that should drive local watershed planning efforts. This method creates forums to find out what stakeholders think about watershed planning and the issues they want incorporated into the plan. By listening to a broad group of stakeholders, it is possible to gain broader agreement on the overall goals that will drive local watershed planning efforts.

Many stakeholders have trouble distinguishing between goals and objectives, and many meetings get seriously side-tracked as folks argue about how each should be defined. The core team should devote upfront time to discuss precisely what is meant by each term and provide specific examples. It may be helpful to provide stakeholders with a copy of Table 6.2, which helps identify the differences in terminology.

Table 6.2: Differences between Watershed Goals, Objectives and Indicators

Goals (broad)	*Objectives (specific)*	*Indicators (numeric)*
General statement of purpose or intent	Precise statement of what needs to be done	Measurable parameter of aquatic health directly linked to goal
Expresses what will be broadly accomplished	Outlines the specific actions that need to happen to achieve the goal	Tracks progress made over time in reaching goal
Understood by the public	Instructions to managers	Interpreted by scientists
Single phrase or slogan	Series of bullets that outline what, how, who, when and where	Chart or statistic showing indicator change over time
Examples		
Maintain yellow perch populations	County to prohibit the creation of new fish barriers to upstream spawning areas	Annual change in fish IBI counts measured at station X in Bear Creek
Reduce nitrogen loading to the Bay	Reduce nitrogen loading from residential land by 40% through fertilizer education program	Before and after responses to resident surveys on fertilizer use

The real work in goal-setting should be done in small groups that work to refine and narrow choices. An independent facilitator and notetaker should be pre-designated for each group, taking care to try to achieve the greatest stakeholder diversity. Groups may be assigned specific goal areas to focus on or tackle the job of ranking their most important goals.

It can be frustrating for stakeholders to create goals and objectives from scratch. It is often helpful to kickstart the process by proposing a "strawman" of potential goals and objectives to prompt reaction and stimulate thinking. The strawman should be general and provide several options so that stakeholders do not feel that they are being railroaded toward a preordained conclusion. The initial goals developed prior to scoping out the watershed plan (see Chapter 3) should be included in this list.

The full group is then reconvened, with each small group reporting out its work. The meeting facilitator then looks for common themes among the group, and seeks a general sense of concurrence on major goals and objectives. Extensive word-smithing should be avoided at this stage. Instead, the facilitator should try to get enough detail on key themes and headlines from the group as a whole so that more polished goals can be drafted quickly after the meeting.

All stakeholders should be offered a chance to comment on the final language of the goals, objectives and indicators after they are drafted. In many cases, this may simply involve e-mails or mail-outs to stakeholders, with a fax-back or e-mail reply request to affirm whether they agree, or have additional comments to make. If consensus remains elusive, then a second facilitated meeting or retreat may be needed to hammer out agreement on the final language.

D. Manage Stakeholder Meetings

The first stakeholder meeting is a chance to report on initial results and get feedback from the "nighttime" stakeholders that live and work in the subwatershed. While evening meetings are frequently used for this purpose, it may also be helpful to arrange a weekend subwatershed tour or stream walk. Stakeholder meetings help the core team get the pulse of the community and discover the issues and concerns that should be incorporated into the subwatershed plan. Three tasks are needed to conduct effective stakeholder meetings:

1. *Prepare for the meeting in advance:* The real challenge for most stakeholder meetings is how to develop effective presentation materials to educate stakeholders. A great deal of technical information must be translated into understandable, accessible and condensed formats. One approach that works well is fact sheets that summarize key elements of the initial subwatershed strategy.

2. *Conduct stakeholder meeting*: The meeting should be structured to give stakeholders meaningful outlets to provide input such as small group exercises, brainstorming sessions, and listening stations. It is sometimes hard to resist the temptation to present to stakeholders rather than listen to them, but at least a third of the meeting time should be devoted to listening to their concerns, questions and opinions.

3. *Perform follow-up tasks after meeting:* Follow-up after the initial stakeholder meeting is critical. The outcome of every meeting should be documented, including attendees, action items, upcoming meetings and how stakeholder concerns will be addressed.

   A number of formats can be used to keep stakeholders informed such as meeting minutes, progress reports, project updates and thank you letters. Email is probably the least costly technique, but hard copies probably have a greater hit rate. A few randomly-selected stakeholders should be contacted after the meeting to get their opinion on how future meetings could be improved. The Real World Example from Howard County's Centennial and Wilde Lakes Restoration Plan shows how all residents living in these watersheds were contacted and invited to meetings.

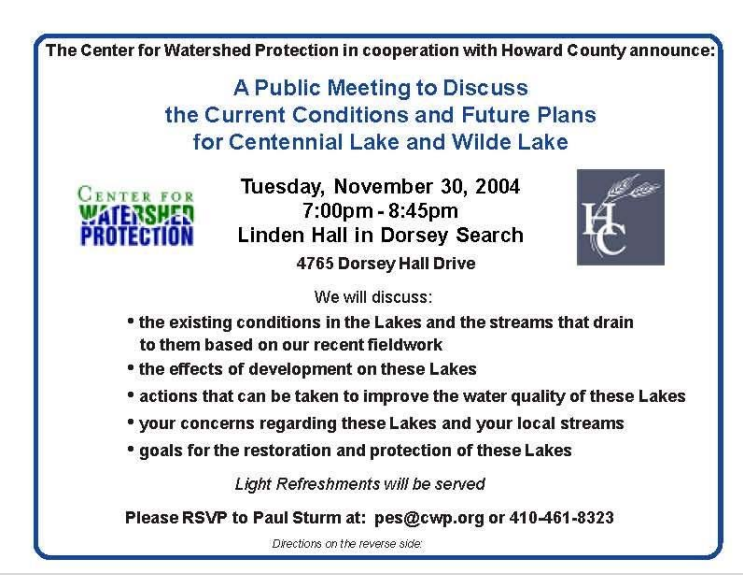
Real World Example: Centennial and Wilde Lakes Watershed Restoration Plan

The Centennial and Wilde Lakes Watershed Restoration Plan, completed in 2005, was undertaken by Howard County as part of their NPDES Phase I MS4 permit requirements. Centennial and Wilde Lakes are located in the Little Patuxent River Watershed and are less than 3.5 square miles and 1.9 square miles, respectively. The plan provided watershed restoration and implementation plans for the two subwatersheds, and is a good example of successful stakeholder contact.

A series of stakeholder meetings were orchestrated to elicit input from stakeholders early in the development of the Restoration Plan. Throughout the process meetings were also held with a number of significant landowners in the watershed including the Howard County Board of Education, Howard County Recreation and Parks Department, and the Columbia Association. The purpose of these meetings was to apprise them of the planning effort and support that may be needed for restoration efforts.

In the Centennial Lake drainage area letters were sent to all the residents living in the watershed, informing them of the project and upcoming meetings (see figure below for an example of how the county contacted residents). In the Wilde Lake watershed, a significantly more developed area, existing community organizations were used to contact and inform residents. As a result of these outreach efforts, approximately 50 stakeholders attended each of the community meetings.

The beginning of each meeting focused on stakeholder education of general watershed principles and findings specific to the Centennial and Wilde Lake watersheds. This gave attendees additional background to thoughtfully develop watershed goals, identify problem areas, and eventually comment on proposed projects.



The Center for Watershed Protection in cooperation with Howard County announce:

A Public Meeting to Discuss
the Current Conditions and Future Plans
for Centennial Lake and Wilde Lake

CENTER FOR WATERSHED PROTECTION

Tuesday, November 30, 2004
7:00pm - 8:45pm
Linden Hall in Dorsey Search
4765 Dorsey Hall Drive

We will discuss:

- the existing conditions in the Lakes and the streams that drain to them based on our recent fieldwork
- the effects of development on these Lakes
- actions that can be taken to improve the water quality of these Lakes
- your concerns regarding these Lakes and your local streams
- goals for the restoration and protection of these Lakes

Light Refreshments will be served

Please RSVP to Paul Sturm at: pes@cwp.org or 410-461-8323

Directions on the reverse side:

Center for Watershed Protection and Tetra Tech. 2005. *Centennial and Wilde Lake Watershed Restoration Plan*. Center for Watershed Protection. Ellicott City, MD.

E. Hold Neighborhood Consultation Meetings

Stormwater retrofits and other restoration projects can significantly alter the local landscape that has been around for years. Neighbors and landowners often have many real or perceived concerns about projects such as tree loss, public access, safety, mosquitoes, vermin, ragweed, maintenance, and other competing public/private uses of the land. Consequently, it is important to give neighbors and adjacent landowners an early opportunity to comment on proposed projects and respond to their concerns prior to final design. Forums and field trips are a good way to get feedback from adjacent residents about proposed projects, and are conducted in four tasks:

1. *Define who is adjacent to the project*: The core team should carefully consider how to define who is considered adjacent to each project.

2. *Notify every address within the boundary*: The goal is to notify everyone within the boundary about the proposed project and invite them to the neighborhood consultation meeting. Consequently, a combination of outreach techniques is needed to advertise neighborhood consultation meetings, including letters sent to affected homeowners and landowners and notices placed in community newsletters.

3. *Arrange meeting or project field visit to discuss project*: Neighborhood consultation meetings are normally scheduled in the evening to coincide with a regular homeowner/civic association meeting. Other methods include weekend project walks, one-on-one briefings, and project evaluation workshops. The meetings should clearly explain what is being proposed, what will happen during construction, and what the project will look like when finished.

4. *Incorporate into the project ranking:* Based on the meeting, the team can gauge the degree of neighborhood acceptance for the project, and derive an index value to include in project ranking. In addition, the team should make sure residents know how their input was reflected in project ranking and design, and immediately follow-up with individuals that raise serious project concerns. In many cases, project designs can be easily modified to satisfy neighborhood concerns, but if controversy continues, it may be necessary to drop the projects from further consideration.

F. Solicit External Plan Review

External review is an important ingredient of a watershed plan as it ensures the plan meets the unique needs of both the subwatershed and the community. Generally, at least one final stakeholder meeting is needed to give stakeholders a chance to express their comments on the draft plan. While it may seem redundant to have yet another round of stakeholder involvement, it is inevitable that some important stakeholders that still want to provide input to the final plan have slipped through the cracks. Their input is not merely editorial; stakeholders and partners are asked to endorse the plan and possibly even commit to specific short-term projects. The goal of external plan review is to solidify support for watershed planning and identify and resolve any implementation issues that may arise. Successful external plan review helps demonstrate a broad community consensus for watershed planning, which is often essential to attract the political support needed to get reliable funding.

Upon completion of the plan, it is time to review it to assess how it aligns with the watershed planning principles and watershed goals and objectives. Once this is done, it is time to send the draft plan out for external review. All stakeholders should be included in the review. It may be necessary to take the time to craft a less technical and "glossy" version of the plan for review by the general public and local officials that may not have the knowledge and experience needed to sort through a technical watershed plan. State agencies should be included in the review process, as well. They may be able to provide additional resources, and they will likely need to approve, permit, fund, track and/or monitor implementation projects. Some of the state agencies that should be included in the review of the draft plan are:

- Department of the Environment
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Planning
- Department of Transportation

Once all comments are addressed, the plan is ready to be finalized and adopted by the local government.